

*Government Orders*

Politicians, especially those in government, seem to be very nervous about the process. The previous government delayed the process more than once because it did not want to put its members at any disadvantage by having shifts in the boundaries, different voters from time and time, and perhaps even a loss of seats if the boundaries showed there should not be as many seats in a province as there were. Governments have shown themselves to be quite reluctant to let the process go forward. The last redistribution was about 10 years ago, even though populations had grown and shifted considerably during that time.

What happened when this government was elected? There was a process to redistribute the boundaries that had been ongoing for some considerable period of time. It had reached the point where the new boundaries had actually been pretty well drawn up by the commissions in each province.

Lo and behold, government members found to their horror and dismay that they were disadvantaged by this democratic process. Their boundaries were to change. In some cases a lot of their ridings would disappear. The support basis they had built up would be interfered with. A nervous hue and cry arose from government members about the process that had been put into place.

Even though the process had already consumed over five million tax dollars, had been properly carried out, and had pretty well been finished for public hearings on the recommendations, the government decided to do it all over again. Therefore it introduced Bill C-69 to start the process all over again. The process is not substantially different from the one that it interfered with. Independent commissions looked at various factors to redraw the riding boundaries. They will have to do that all over again if the bill passes. We are not quite sure why because the result will be about the same.

• (1225)

There are four problems with the bill that Canadians should know about and they are the reasons we are not supporting the bill.

The first problem and the biggest problem is that the bill and the process that it endorses would increase the number of members of Parliament by six. Instead of the 295 members that we have today there would be 301. The growth under the bill would continue so that for every Parliament there would be more and more parliamentarians. We will be putting people in the galleries who are supposed to be representing constituents because there is not enough room down here.

This is simply nonsense. It shows a shocking lack of sensible leadership by the government. It had a perfect opportunity to cap or diminish the number of members of Parliament. A number of my colleagues have spoken at length about the fact that the country is overgoverned and has far more representatives per capita than almost any other democracy. Yet somehow the Liberals are telling Canadian people, with straight faces, that they need more MPs.

For goodness' sake, why? Already government members have been told by the Prime Minister how they are to vote on pain of being expelled from the party and not being allowed to do their job as a representative next time around. Why do we need more members to be whipped into line and to stand like trained seals to do as they are told? How will that benefit the people of the country?

The Reform Party put forward a very sensible proposal to modestly reduce the number of MPs from 295 to 273. This would be done on a very fair and equitable basis. I am willing to bet any province that loses MPs will not have a great revolt and say: "Give us more MPs; we must have more MPs". That simply will not happen. The country is tired of being overgoverned. It is looking for a little leadership, a little sensibility in the way we put together the House of Commons.

As other members of my party have done, I point out that every member of Parliament costs at least \$500,000 and probably more per year, not to mention the pension that is in place for these individuals which they collect after only six years of service until the date of their death.

When seniors' pensions are being cut back, when health care services are being lost daily, and when unemployment insurance benefits are being cut back by a minimum of 10 per cent in the last budget, why on earth would we spend scarce dollars on more representatives in the House, if the 295 members we have now cannot get their act together and get the country into good shape?

It simply does not make sense. I am ashamed to be part of a House of Commons—and I would certainly be ashamed to be part of a government; thank goodness I am not—that cannot do better than that for the people of Canada. On that basis alone this is a bad bill.

The government lost a tremendous opportunity to get some sense and some balance back into the number of representatives and to spend money wisely. We need enough people to do the job but not ever increasing or ever expanding numbers.

The second problem with the bill is the Liberal insistence that there can be a variance between the number of people in each riding of up to 25 per cent.